

# The Nation's Lament.

## A SERMON

PREACHED BY THE

REV. DR. ADLER,

*Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the  
British Empire.*

AT THE

## MEMORIAL SERVICE

HELD AT THE

GREAT SYNAGOGUE,

ON

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 20TH, 1892,

*The day of the Funeral of*

His Late Royal Highness PRINCE ALBERT VICTOR,  
DUKE OF CLARENCE AND AVONDALE.

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## THE NATION'S LAMENT.

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הוי אחי והוי אחות הוי אדוני והוי הרה :

"Ah, my brother ! ah, my sister ! alas ! for our lord  
alas ! for his glory."—(Jer. xxii. *part of* v. 18.)

THESE plaintive ejaculations are, in all probability, a fragment of the funeral dirge which the Prophet Jeremiah composed on the occasion of the early death of good King Josiah. This monarch ascended the throne of Judah at the tender age of eight years, and proved himself to be the most godly of the royal race. But—strange and mysterious dispensation! Actuated, probably, by loyalty to the Assyrian King, he goes to war against Pharaoh Necho of Egypt ; he is struck by an arrow, and exclaims, "Have me away, for I am sore wounded."\* The young King is borne bleeding from the fray in the valley of Megiddo and is brought back to Jerusalem.

\* 2 Chronicles xxxv. 23.

He died, and was buried in the sepulchre of his fathers. "And all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah." We may picture to ourselves the men and women pouring forth their lamentation : " Ah, my brother ! ah, my sister ! alas ! for our lord, alas ! for his glory ! " Ah, that our good king should have been snatched away in the midst of his bright career, when he had just inaugurated a new era of blessing for the nation. " The breath of our life, the anointed of the Lord, of whom we said, Under his shadow shall we live." \*

My dear brethren, We feel impelled to chant this funeral dirge and to utter these plaintive ejaculations on the youthful prince whose mortal remains have just now been consigned to the sepulchre of his ancestors. Tragic deaths like unto this have before occurred in our Royal House. There are a few still living who have a dim recollection of the grief which convulsed the nation at the sudden death of the Princess Charlotte. But she had spent at least one year of wedded happiness at the side of her beloved

\* Lamentations iv. 20.

husband, rejoicing in the affection of her people. Most of us, no doubt, recollect the sorrow with which England was thrilled when, thirty years ago, Albert the Good breathed his last. But the Prince Consort had lived a life of conspicuous usefulness, the companion of a wife who adored him, the counsellor of a Queen whose heart did fully trust in him. But the tragedy we now lament is invested with a deep pathos all its own.

If the question had been asked but a brief fortnight since, Who is the happiest man in this realm? the answer would have been given, Assuredly the Duke of Clarence! For is he not heir to the most exalted position on earth, destined hereafter to rule the mightiest Empire in the world's history? Has he not been trained with sedulous care for the discharge of his high functions? Is he not the pride of his parents, the hope of his people? Is he not about to be wedded to a young and charming Princess, to whom he is attached by the ties of warmest affection, one worthy to share his brilliant future and to aid in the fulfilment of his high duties? One short

week of illness, wholly unexpected and un-anticipated; and—instead of marriage bells there is heard the solemn funeral knell and the throb of the muffled drum; sombre trappings of woe have taken the place of the bridal robe, the May flower and the orange-blossom. And in that same Chapel where he would have stood—five weeks hence—a joyous bridegroom, his coffin has this day been placed.

It is related in the Talmud\* that R. Chanin had been childless for many years. At last his dearest wish is fulfilled. A son is born to him. But on the self-same day the hapless father dies. And the preacher thus commenced his funeral oration :

שְׂמֵחָה לְהוֹנָה נִהְפְּכָה שְׂשׂוֹן וַיָּגוֹן בְּדָבָר  
בָּעֵת שִׂמְחָתוֹ נֵאֱנַח בָּעֵת חֲנִיכָתוֹ אָבֵד חֲנִינוֹ :

“Alas, alas ! bright joy is changed to pain ;  
Where bliss had entered grief is doomed to reign,  
For in the moment of his hope fulfilled  
The joyous beating of that heart was stilled.”

It is so even now. And all that we can do is to pour forth our lamentation and to offer

\* Moed Katan, p. 25 b. cf. Midrash Koheleth, ii. 2.



the tribute of our profoundest sympathy. "Ah, my brother ! ah, my sister ! alas ! for our lord, alas ! for his glory !" This is the burden of all our thoughts and sentiments. We have viewed this loss not as a calamity that has fallen on the Royal House alone. We have felt it as though it were a bereavement in our own intimate family circle. Our hearts go out in deepest and truest sorrow to the mourners as though they were of our immediate kindred. We feel impelled to exclaim, " Ah, my brother ! ah, my sister !" Our heart goes out to the Queen, who has already been so sorely tried by many grievous afflictions, who, we had fondly hoped, would have been blessed with a placid, unruffled old age. In her own pathetic words, " She was devotedly attached to her beloved grandson, whose charming disposition and high character had endeared him to her since his childhood." Our heart goes out to the parents, whose home, so familiar to us with its affection and its tenderness, has been invaded by death. When the prophet Zechariah desired to portray the intensity of the grief that would

affect the nation for one who had been slain in battle, he said : **וְהָמָר עָלָיו כְּהָמָר עַל הַבְּכוֹר :** "They shall be in bitterness for him as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn."\* It is with such anguish that father and mother now bow their heads. Our heart goes out in wistful, earnest sympathy to the sweet maid whose name is on every lip—"a girl in the flush of her first love, moving in the light of happy greetings towards the near gladness of her marriage morn."

"Scarce had she time to reach and clasp  
The gifts of Love, but they were ashes in her grasp."

But is the tribute of sympathy all that we are able to offer? Is there no real consolation that we can bring to this grief? Not *we*, but the blessed promise of divine revelation!

To our poor purblind eyes the life of the young Duke seems pitifully incomplete, and his end sadly premature and untimely. But what is life? Is it to eat, and drink, and sleep without one lofty thought or pure spiritual emotion? Is it to indulge in boister-

\* Zechariah xii. 10.

ous rounds of pleasure, in gaieties and excesses, that which the "gilded youth" of our day terms "seeing life"? Is it the mere lapse of years? If so, the carp should be the happiest of creatures, living as it does to 150 or even 200 years.

But assuredly the only life acceptable to God is a life of duty and obedience, of service done to our fellow-men. Judged by this principle will you assert that the end of Prince Albert Victor's career is indeed so premature? Did he not, even during the few years of his existence, gain for himself the precious possession of a good name? We all admired the modest, the amiable, the unassuming fashion in which he discharged the public functions entrusted to him. And there is one trait which should especially endear his memory to us Hebrews. Ten years ago, while on a tour round the world, he and his brother visited Jerusalem. On this occasion he witnessed the celebration of the Passover Service at the house of the Haham Bashi. He spent three hours there, and although, no doubt, some of the rites, especially as performed in

the Orient, must have appeared strange and quaint to him, his demeanour during the entire ceremonial, and his description of it are uniformly reverential, and full of appreciative references to our faith. And, indeed, throughout his whole career he "wore the white flower of a blameless life!" All his public utterances betoken his vivid interest in deeds of charity, and his sincere desire to promote the welfare of the working classes. Shall we then persist in deploring his end as premature! Surely

"Death cannot come

To him untimely who is fit to die ;

The less of this cold world, the more of heaven :

The briefer life, the earlier immortality."

You may remember a picture by Mr. Watts, which represents the angel of Death as a genial cherisher and kind nurse. The angel, whose face is bent forward, and whose vast wings overshadow her, holds a little child in her arms, and seems to shelter it from all danger and all change, with a protection as strong as it is tender. This is the light in which Holy Scripture presents death

to us—not as the cruel messenger coming so unwelcome, but as the kindly gift of God, soothing his weary child of earth to rest : **כֵּן יִתֵּן לִידְדּוֹ שָׁנָא** : “ Thus he giveth his beloved sleep.” \*

But a brief life and a sudden death such as this preach their solemn lesson to us all, and admonish us to make a worthy use of the years that are so fleeting, so evanescent. It is but natural to pray, especially at this time of prevailing sickness and peril of death, **אֱלֹהֵי אֵל תַּעֲלֵי בְּחַיֵּי יָמַי** : “ Oh, my God, take me not away in the midst of my days.” † But it is of scant value merely to offer up this petition. We must seek to realise it. We must so live, that, whenever we are taken away, ours shall have been a full and complete life. We must live the life of sincere and upright Jews and Jewesses, of reflective, earnest, high-souled men and women, who have grasped the end and purpose of their existence upon earth, who are governed by high principles and holy motives, whose energies are devoted to the education of self

\* Psalm cxxvii. 2.

† Psalm cii. 25.



and the good of their fellow men, who feel that though their body be destined to dissolution, yet their true essence is deathless—spirit of God's undying spirit, soul of His immortal soul!

My brethren, An old Saxon chieftain was once revelling with his boon companions in the lighted banqueting-hall, when he noticed a bird flying through from end to end. And he exclaimed, "Even thus is *our* fate! From darkness we come. We speed for a while through a gay and merry world, and then again lapse into darkness."

Ah, not so, dear congregants. If we have risen to the true conception of life, then our end will not be a leap in the dark; but

"Life's race well run;  
Life's work well done;  
Life's crown well won!"

then come rest and peace—rest with God, peace everlasting.

Let us implore the Lord to grant this rest, this peace, this bliss to the Prince whose memory we seek to honour to-day!

## PRAYER.

O God of faithfulness! Thy ways are just and right. Our soul fainted within us, and every eye was dimmed with tears, when the grievous tidings came that there had been taken from us in the flower of his years, the future heir of England's throne, the pride of his parents and his country's hope, the PRINCE ALBERT VICTOR, DUKE OF CLARENCE AND AVONDALE.

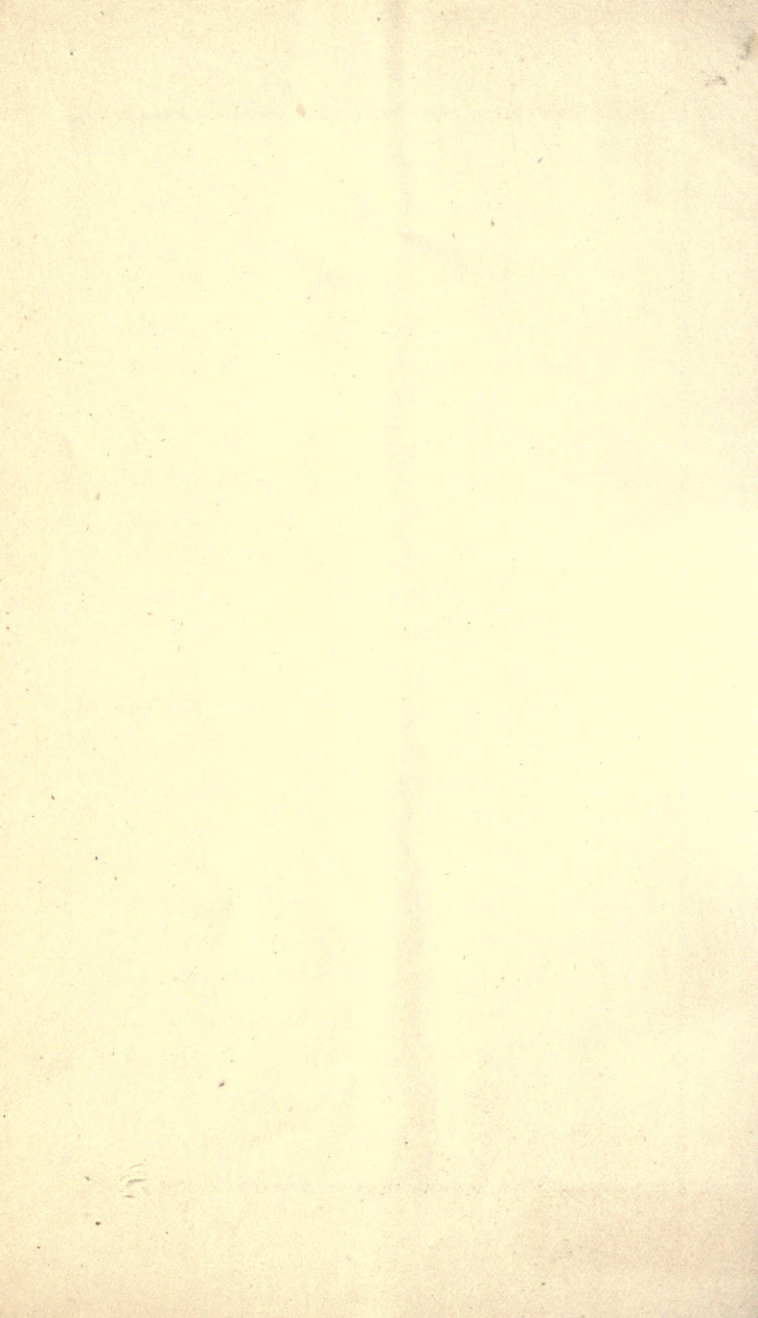
Lord of Recompense! Remember unto him the goodly deeds he wrought in his brief years. May his soul be bound up in the bond of life everlasting with the souls of his beloved kinsfolk that have gone to their eternal rest.

Thou who art the source of all comfort! May Thy heavenly consolations sustain the spirit of OUR GRACIOUS QUEEN, whose heart was knitted to her grandson with the tie of tenderest affection. May her sorrow be assuaged by the thought that her throne is firmly established in the hearts of her people, who rejoice in her joy, and who are afflicted in her affliction.

Thou, O Lord, who healest the broken-hearted and bindest up their wounds, send Thy comfort to the PRINCE AND PRINCESS OF WALES, who mourn in bitterness for their dear firstborn son. Uphold with the spirit of Thy grace the sorely-stricken Princess who weepeth for the loss of the beloved one that had been affianced unto her. Send Thy comfort to all the members of the Royal House. Turn their sorrow into rejoicing, and gird them with gladness.

All-merciful Father! Thou makest sore and bindest up, Thou woundest and Thy hands make whole. May it be Thy gracious will to remove from our midst the malady that walketh in darkness. Deliver our souls from death, our eyes from tears, our feet from falling. Quicken us, turn us, O Lord God of Hosts, cause Thy face to shine, and we shall be saved. Amen.







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